

**Burns, Vanessa**

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**From:** Cathy B. Petrone [fiveinparty@aol.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2011 8:55 PM  
**To:** AppropriationTestimony  
**Subject:** Testimony of the Department of Developmental Services Budget

To the members of the Appropriations Committee:

I would like to express my thoughts and concerns on the DDS budget. My son is 24 years old and since his graduation and exit from the public schools, he has relied on the DDS budget to fund some of the needs of his daily life. By that I mean he uses DDS monies, through the Medicaid waiver, to purchase individualized day services. In the past years this has taken the form of job coaching, job development, support during volunteering, behavior and social support, in short many of the things needed by a person with a developmental disability as he tries to be a contributing part of his community. Young people are graduating from inclusive high school programs and expect to live a full adult life like any non-disabled citizen of CT. The use of these support services is subject to complex regulations, are difficult to obtain, and we as a family take this funding very seriously. Currently my son has less than 16 hours a week of services, and his father and I must plan our schedules around his. As you can imagine, this is very difficult and stressful as we try to work to support our family, which includes two other children. I am asking that we do not cut the DDS budget that pertains to direct funding to individuals who get their support thorough the non-profit agencies, or those that use direct private hires. The agencies are already strapped for funds, have received no cost of living raises, and have difficulty hiring. Private hires often enable families to tailor their supports more closely to their family member.

My son and others like him need these services as their life line to the outside world. Our family, and others around the state and the country have sacrificed greatly to ensure our children have equal access to what is needed to function in their community--first in their schools and their health care needs, and now in the adult world. As we all are well-aware, jobs are very scarce now, and the meaningful job coaching and developing that these funds provide give a glimmer of hope that my son will be able to find and hold a job. One of my son's volunteer jobs is in our local soup kitchen. When he came home one afternoon, I asked him what he did that day. "I feed the hungry," was his reply. Without the proper supports, he would be home doing nothing, losing hard-won skills, and creating more dependency and possibly greater needs as he ages. This is a haunting thought, and ultimately would cost the state more if his needs increase due to lack of meaningful support. I implore you to please continue to fund the DDS services that enable my son and others with developmental disabilities to do their best to function in a world that is often dismissive and indifferent.

I also ask that the discussion on joining residential and day funding be opened--right now we have no possibility of residential supports, yet would like to use his funding for things that would help him live a more independent life. This is prohibited now. We look at my son's life as a total picture, I hope that the State of Connecticut would consider doing this also.

I cannot stress enough how vital these services are for the people that use them, their families, and the community at large.. These individuals need and deserve a hand up, so they can partake and give back to our state. Many families, already stressed, would fracture completely without these DDS supports.

Thank you.

Cathy Barbella Petrone  
Fairfield, CT